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**SCHAKOWSKY SAYS FTC REPORT PROVES BIG OIL GOUGED CONSUMERS LAST YEAR AND WITHHELD SUPPLIES TO DRIVE UP PRICES**

**FTC REPORT: *"[P]RICE SPIKES ARE LIKELY TO OCCUR IN THE FUTURE IN THE MIDWEST AND OTHER AREAS OF THE COUNTRY."***

CHICAGO, IL - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today said that big oil gouged consumers in Chicago and the Midwest last year. According to a Federal Trade Commission (FTC) report, oil companies withheld supplies to drive up the price of gasoline at the pump. Schakowsky and other colleagues asked the FTC to conduct the investigation last year.

"The FTC report affirmed what I have been saying all along: big oil gouged consumers last year. They made market decisions to push prices up and increase their profits, at the expense of consumers. Oil companies may not have gotten together in a room and colluded, they just figured it out on their own," Schakowsky said.

According to the report, among the factors contributing to the spike in the prices last summer was *"decisions by firms to maximize profits."* Schakowsky said that these companies decided that creating supply shortages to justify higher prices was in their corporate interests.

The report also found that *"[p]rice spikes are likely to occur in the future in the Midwest and other areas of the country."*

"There is nothing stopping big oil from doing the same thing again this summer. We just witnessed a price increase in Chicago, and unless the federal government steps in, consumers will have to live through another summer of more than \$2 a gallon at the gas pump," Schakowsky added.

"It may not bother the big oil friendly Bush Administration that the oil companies are making record profits at the expense of consumers, businesses, and farmers. It bothers me and the constituents I represent," Schakowsky concluded.

Schakowsky is a member of the Democratic Energy Task Force and had recently contacted Energy Secretary Abraham requesting a meeting to discuss high natural gas and gasoline prices. She also called on President Bush and Vice President Cheney to use their close ties to oil and gas industry executives to urge them not to take in excessive profits this summer and not to gouge consumers at the gas pumps.